

TO: PHtestimony@cga.ct.gov
SUBJECT: **Oppose HB-5044**

I oppose HB-5044. The Connecticut Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and a free and appropriate education for all children. According to the Connecticut Constitution, the State can only overrule these freedoms when it can prove, with empirical evidence, a **compelling interest** and when it can prove that it has applied the **least restrictive means** to meet that State interest. The burden of proof falls on the State. The State of Connecticut has failed to prove a compelling interest with empirical evidence. Rhetoric and popular opinion are not substantial enough to strip civil liberties. The State of Connecticut has failed to apply the least restrictive means to meet its interest. There are already measures in place to protect Connecticut citizens in the event of an outbreak that do not include stripping parental rights and removing healthy children from school.

Protect religious freedom, parental rights and the fundamental right to a free and equal education. Vote No on HB-5044.

Respectfully,
Michael Labieniec
Newtown, CT.